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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIJING 002946

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [KIRF](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [CH](#)
SUBJECT: XINJIANG: URUMQI CAUTIOUSLY CALM AS RIOT TRIALS
CONTINUE

REF: A. BEIJING 2492
[B](#). BEIJING 2183
[C](#). BEIJING 1055

Classified By: Political Section Chief Aubrey Carlson. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: During October 19-21 travel to Urumqi, PolOffs confirmed that security measures and troop presence remained high; People's Armed Police, local municipal police, and volunteer security personnel continuously patrolled the city. Most Urumqi residents we spoke to cautiously claimed that the overall security situation had stabilized in the last two weeks. A Uighur lawyer defending Uighurs accused of crimes linked to the July 5 riots shared that the trials are scheduled to continue over the next year. He characterized the trials as unfair due to the exclusion of lawyers from outside the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) and because of government pressure on defense lawyers. These and other actions by the court and government in prosecuting these cases made presenting a credible defense impossible, he said. The Rebiya Kadeer Trade Tower remained closed, but was still standing. The Chinese government still had not lifted restrictions on communications -- including Internet access, texting, and international phone calls to or from the XUAR -- implemented following the July riots. Contacts did not know when these restrictions would be lifted. End Summary.

Semi-Official Visit

[1](#)2. (C) PolOffs traveled October 19-21 to the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) regional capital of Urumqi. While the provincial Foreign Affairs Office was not involved in the trip, PolOffs identified themselves as Embassy employees in all meetings with contacts, including lawyers, academics and religious leaders.

Security Presence High; Situation Cautiously Calm

[1](#)3. (C) PolOffs observed Special Police (Te Jing or SWAT police) augmenting PAP posts throughout Urumqi. The People's Armed Police, local municipal police, and volunteer personnel patrolled most areas of Urumqi, but the security presence and static posts were more highly concentrated in Uighur neighborhoods. At the southern end of South Liberation Street (Jiefang NanLu) and the western edge of the Uighur neighborhood of Erdaoqiao, posts of four to eight security personnel behind riot barricades stood in various busy street corners. The parking lot in front of the People's Theater, a Russian-style building, was still used exclusively to park troop trucks. All observed markings and uniforms of armed guards were either those of the People's Armed Police, local municipal police, special police, or volunteer personnel.

[1](#)4. (C) Urumqi residents with whom PolOffs spoke shared mixed

views on the security situation and the contribution of security forces to the city's tenuous calm. Most passersby that PolOffs interviewed said the overall environment had become more stable and calmer in the past two weeks. Nonetheless, many people still expressed reservations about the city's general safety level. Three female vendors in an all but empty Erdaoqiao market stated that the overall security situation had stabilized, but advised PolOffs not to leave their hotel in the evening. In contrast, a cab driver stated that he felt there was no problem with going out at night. The Vice-Chairperson of the Urumqi Christian Council and Pastor of the Mingde Church, the largest (Han) Christian church in Urumqi, assessed that the situation was calm but insisted upon driving PolOffs to the hotel because PolOffs "were not familiar" with Urumqi at night. A Uighur lawyer (see para 6) believed that Urumqi was still unstable and needed the military presence to prevent further violence.

15. (C) PolOffs visited several mosques in the Erdaoqiao neighborhood. Most had little or no special security or troop presence on their perimeters. A local Muslim and four young volunteer security personnel in front of the Xiheba mosque at the western edge of Erdaoqiao forbade PolOffs from entering the mosque. They commented that prior to July 5 there would have been no problem with outsiders visiting the mosque. These new restrictions applied to Muslims from outside the XUAR as well. In contrast, at a majority Hui mosque nearby, a Muslim man welcomed PolOffs and showed them the main prayer hall without reservation. He expressed appreciation for the troops, stating that they were there to protect the people.

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Uighur Lawyer: Riot Trials to Continue for One Year

16. (C) On October 20, PolOffs met Dawuti Aihaiti (protect) outside the Urumqi City Intermediate People's Court courthouse. Aihaiti is a Uighur lawyer directly involved in defending Uighur clients in cases of crimes committed in relation to the July 5 riots. Aihaiti stated that, to his knowledge, the Intermediate People's Court had decided 21 cases thus far and was scheduled to try 700-800 cases over the coming year. Aihaiti noted that the courts would be trying 30-100 people per week to meet this timeline. Aihaiti judged that the trials were "unfair" for three primary reasons: 1) lawyers from outside the XUAR were not allowed to be involved in the July 5 riot cases; 2) Uighur lawyers could not freely express their opinions (they were forced to say "white is black and black is white" in accordance with the Chinese government's judgment), and; 3) the Uighurs being tried together at one hearing were indicted for unrelated incidents, thereby making their collective defense difficult. Aihaiti said that he did not have much hope in defending the indicted Uighurs fairly, but said that he still needed to be faithful to his job as a Uighur lawyer. (Note: Aihaiti has been practicing law in Urumqi for more than twenty years. He briefly showed PolOff official documents from that day's trial proceedings, which were written in the Uighur language.)

17. (C) Beijing University professor and Charter 08 signatory He Weifang, who has been assigned to teach at Shihezi College outside Urumqi for what many consider to be two years of exile, commented that the Chinese government was being short-sighted in its handling of the trials and the riots. If the trials were not handled fairly, he said, they could become yet another source of ethnic tension and another July 5-type incident could occur.

Rebiya Kadeer Building Still Standing

18. (C) PolOffs investigated the status of the Rebiya Kadeer Trade Tower, which stands on the corner of a busy commercial intersection on Jiefang NanLu (South Liberation Street), in

Erdaoqiao, one of Urumqi's Uighur neighborhoods. The white, six- to seven-storey building remained cordoned off with blue construction-type fencing. In contrast to previous visits (see reftels), Chinese characters displaying the name "Rebiya" on the rooftop of the building had been removed or were no longer visible. The overall condition of the building remained poor; it was visibly dilapidated. A security guard posted at the entry of a building directly across the street informed PolOffs that all of the businesses that had previously occupied the Trade Center had relocated to a modern-looking trade building across the street. The same policeman offered his assessment that the Rebiya building would "not necessarily" be torn down. A smaller building on the south side of the Trade Tower was also cordoned off by the same construction fencing. Previous reporting stated that buildings surrounding the Trade Tower, including one across the street, were in various stages of demolition. PolOffs confirmed that the building directly to the west side of the Trade Tower (previously a hotel) had also been closed. Across the street to the north, a new building was already in the early stages of construction. No increased police or other heightened security presence was noted in the area immediately in front of, or around, the Rebiya Trade Tower.

Info Restrictions and Propaganda Campaigns Continue

19. (C) Urumqi, like all of the XUAR, remained in an information black-out, with texting, international calls and Internet access all blocked. All contacts knew only rumors about when Internet access and other means of communication would be restored. There were numerous propaganda signs both within Urumqi and on surrounding roads. Of note was a propaganda banner written in Chinese and English that said, "Unity and Stability are a Blessing; Separation and Disturbance are a Misfortune." A banner hanging on the front of the Shanxi (Hui Muslim) mosque in the Erdaoqiao Uighur neighborhood stated, "Continue ethnic equality, strengthen ethnic unity, solidify societal stability."
HUNTSMAN